

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY
FORT HUACHUCA, AZ 85613

MEDDAC MEMORANDUM
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Medical Services
CHAPERONE POLICY

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1. HISTORY: This is a new publication.

2. PURPOSE: To provide guidance on the provision of chaperones and ensure patient's rights to be interviewed and examined in an environment that provides reasonable assurance of propriety and privacy. To protect providers against unfounded accusations of inappropriate behavior during the examination of patients.

3. SCOPE: This policy applies to all personnel assigned or attached to USA MEDDAC, Fort Huachuca, AZ, and its outlying health clinics and American Red Cross Volunteers.

4. REFERENCE: Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, current edition.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES:

5.1 Command will: Investigate patient complaints of sexual impropriety or exploitation during medical care.

5.2 Department, service, and section chiefs will: Develop chaperone mechanisms that protect patient and staff rights. Ensure that staff members are aware of the chaperone policy, and that the patient is informed of the right to have a chaperone.

5.3 Healthcare providers will:

5.3.1 Verbally inform the patient of the right to have a chaperone

5.3.2 Request a chaperone when performing high-risk examinations, or when the potential for allegations exists.

5.4 Chaperones will:

5.4.1 Ensure maximum privacy of the patient by providing appropriate draping, security, and instruction prior to and during the procedures.

5.4.2 Remain within direct observation of the patient during the examination and practitioner's contact with the patient.

5.4.3 Note any deviations from normal examination procedures that might be interpreted as sexual impropriety.

5.4.4 Report any deviation or complaint of sexual impropriety to his/her supervisory chain

6. DEFINITION: A chaperone is a staff member designated to attend and/or assist while a healthcare provider examines a patient. A chaperone is generally required when a healthcare provider examines a patient of the opposite sex, generally when the examination involves a body area not normally exposed, such as the genitalia or female breast. Regardless, all patients should be offered the opportunity for a chaperone if requested.

7. PROCEDURES:

7.1 Each patient receiving care will be interviewed and examined in surroundings that ensure reasonable visual and auditory privacy. This includes the right to have a chaperone during examinations or procedures involving sensitive areas. The chaperone is present to protect both the patient and the healthcare provider in case of allegation of misconduct, and to assist with the examination.

7.2 Patients will be offered the opportunity to have a chaperone present during an examination, treatment, or procedure. Special attention will be given to those examinations, treatments, or procedures that involve sensitive or potentially compromising situations. This usually includes any examination or exposure of the genitalia or female breasts (e.g., pelvic examination, prostate examination, etc.).

7.3 A chaperone will be the same sex as the patient whenever possible.

7.3.1 At times, obtaining a same-sex chaperone may delay the procedure or treatment, in which case, the patient will be advised of the delay.

7.3.2 If a same-sex staff member is not present in the immediate care area to serve as a chaperone, one may be obtained by contacting the NCOIC, Ambulatory Clinics or the Senior Clinical NCO. After normal duty hours, contact the Nursing Supervisor. If in an outlying clinic, contact the Chief Nurse or NCOIC. All available staff on duty should be considered and an appropriate staff member sent to serve as a chaperone.

7.3.3 If a same sex staff member is not available, an opposite sex chaperone may be used. If the patient wants a chaperone and if the patient does not consent to having an opposite sex chaperone and no other chaperone is available, the provider must refer the patient to another source of care.

7.4 The patient will be allowed to disrobe and dress in private and will be provided an appropriate gown or drape to maintain modesty while meeting the needs of the examination. Disrobing assistance may be provided as necessary by the chaperone.

7.5 A provider may use a chaperone as a witness whenever indicated. If a patient declines a chaperone, and the provider deems it necessary, the provider must consider whether to perform the examination or to refer the patient to another source of care. The medical necessity (care will be considered along with the mental competency of the patient. These events will be documented, and the provider should seek advice from his/her chain of command.

7.6 Patients who prefer to have a family member/significant other as a chaperone may do so with the approval of the provider. The provider may also have a staff chaperone present, if indicated.

The proponent of this memorandum is the Deputy Commander for Health Services. Users are invited to send comments on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) directly to the Commander, USA MEDDAC, ATTN: MCXJ-DCHS, Fort Huachuca, AZ 85613-7079.

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